

State Senator Vi Simpson



Education Issues



The state of education



Problems facing our schools

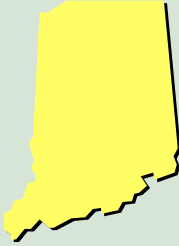


Ongoing education policy



Get involved!

Under the recently passed state budget, as many as 5,700 Indiana teachers are expected to be laid off, the average class size will go up from 22 students to 28 students and important courses including advanced placement classes, art, music, secondary language and some vocational and technical classes will be eliminated. At the same time, by "passing the budget buck" to local communities, Indiana's property owners can expect to see their property taxes increase by as much as \$850 million statewide.



Get involved!

Contact me to get on our 'Education Leaders' mailing list, or go online to sign our petition asking for a stronger state commitment to school funding.

Visit our website to get involved today!

www.senatedemocrats.in.gov

Tell the Governor that our children deserve the best education we can provide:

**The Honorable Mitch Daniels
Governor of Indiana
200 West Washington St.
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204
(317) 232-4567
www.in.gov/gov**

Back to school

As thousands of Hoosier kids return to school this fall, many will be greeted by very different classrooms than the ones they left.

Thanks to the recently approved two-year state budget, which I did not support, many Indiana children can expect to see larger class sizes, fewer teachers and a much more limited academic curriculum.

The \$24.4 billion state budget, signed into law by Governor Mitch Daniels, dramatically reduces the state's financial support to 143 rural and urban school corporations across the state.

At the same time, the budget shifts much of the responsibility for paying for our schools from the state onto the backs of local property tax payers.

The myth behind 'The money follows the child'

With the passage of this budget, Indiana's education funding was changed dramatically by instituting a new philosophy known as 'The Money Follows the Child.' This new method assigns each Indiana student a set amount of money each year that follows them from school to school. While this may sound like a reasonable way to disperse education dollars, the reality of the situation is very different.

More funding will flow to those school corporations with an increased student enrollment. However, for schools with a stable or declining student population, this proposal has caused significant cuts in state dollars, particularly to schools in urban and rural areas. And even in growing school corporations, there will be fewer dollars per student than they received last year.

This experimental plan also fails to take into account two key realities. First, all kids are not the same. Not every child comes to school at the same level of preparation as other children. Some have a greater number of challenges to



overcome such as poverty, parental education level and single parent households, all of which may impact a child's preparation level. These children often cost more to educate and to prepare them to achieve their full potential.

Second, this scheme does not take into account the fact that all schools have certain 'fixed costs' that must be paid in order to operate. Those include expenditures like utilities, insurance, transportation (including gas), security and building maintenance costs, just to name a few. These expenses do not change just because there are fewer students in a school from one year to the next. In fact, many urban and rural school buildings are older and require even more financial assistance just to function, forcing those schools to use funding for maintenance and operation that could go towards classroom programs.

A commitment to educating our kids

Creating a budget is all about setting the priorities of the State of Indiana. The state's commitment to education is in question - and that is unacceptable. An additional \$100 million would guarantee that all children have at least a minimum of resources so that every child can excel. To that end, my Democrat colleagues and I proposed alternative ways to fairly fund schools without raising taxes.

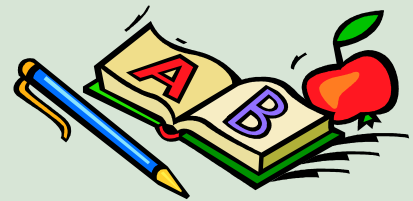
One of our ideas was to limit the amount of Property Tax Credits received by the wealthiest Hoosier taxpayers. Right now all Hoosier homeowners, regardless of their income, have about 36% of their property taxes paid by the state. We proposed capping state property tax relief on the most expensive homes or property, saving the state approximately \$100 million per year which could be dedicated toward funding public education.

This proposal, along with several other alternatives, was defeated on a partisan vote. Now, Hoosiers can expect to see increases in their property tax bills in order to maintain their schools and local governments, while our kids can look forward to fewer educational opportunities.

Good news!

Our students are great achievers. Indiana has some of the highest academic standards in the nation and ranks among the highest test scores in the world!

- SAT scores have increased by 35 points since 1990, 5 points better than any other state.
- 63% of students now achieve the Core 40 Diploma.
- 28% achieve Academic Honors Diplomas.
- Hoosier students achieved the highest attendance rates in state history.
- The number of Hoosier students going to college has risen to the highest level in state history at 70 percent.
- For the 14th straight year, Indiana students scored above the national average on the ACT college entrance exam.



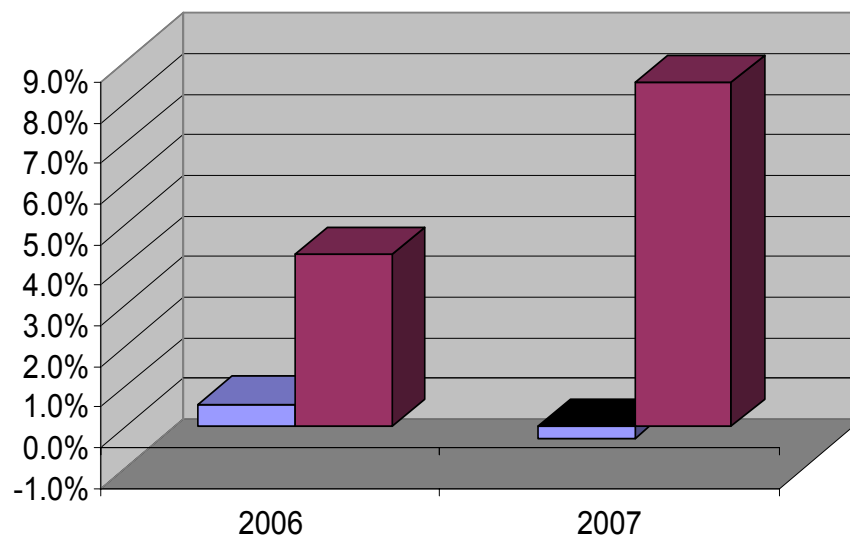
- Indiana students outscored the national average in Grades 4 and 8 in reading and math on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the Nation's Report Card. No more than eight states scored significantly higher than Indiana in any category.



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Change in Contributions to Total School Funding Statewide



State Contribution	0.6%	-0.3%
Property Tax Contribution	4.2%	8.5%